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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Continuing to win its battle against extinction, the trumpeter swan, largest migratory waterfowl of the North American continent, has increased its population four-fold in the past 10 years until it now numbers at least 301 birds, exclusive of those in the Canadian colonies, according to data submitted today to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

The latest count showed 60 birds on the Yellowstone National Park and 163 on the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Montana. The remainder were scattered in the general vicinity of these two areas and on the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming and Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon.

In 1944 the estimated number of trumpeter swans in the United States was 283; in 1943, 221.

In 1935 only 73 of these magnificent birds, which have a wingspread of 8 feet, remained in the United States. In that year the Fish and Wildlife Service established the Red Rock Lakes Refuge, in southwestern Montana, and began the long struggle to save this swan from almost certain extinction.

Trumpeter swan populations since annual counts have been made are as follows: 73 in 1935; 114 in 1936; 168 in 1937; 148 in 1938; 199 in 1939; 185 in 1940; 211 in 1941; and 199 in 1942.

With the hope of starting new nesting colonies, the Service transplanted some of the birds in 1939 to the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming and to the Malheur

Refuge in Oregon, both congenial areas within the trumpeter's ancient breeding range.

Nesting occurred on the National Elk Refuge in both 1944 and 1945 and, barring some unexpected event, Service scientists believe that the species will continue to breed at this location. So far no nesting has been noted on the Malheur Refuge.

During the 1945 nesting season on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge, the activities of the swans were carefully checked by Dr. Ward M. Sharp, refuge manager. To reduce nest disturbance to a minimum, certain lookout points were selected which had access to the nesting areas and the birds were studied through a telescope.

"The first broods were seen on the Lower Red Rock Lake on June 25," reported Dr. Sharp, "approximately 10 days later than in the two previous nesting seasons. By late July all broods were off the nests and a total of 17 adult pairs were counted leading broods which numbered from one to six young about the refuge lakes and marshes. Fifty young were reared in 1945. Of interest was the finding of two nests with clutches containing seven eggs each. Twenty-one nests were located during the nesting season, of which three failed to hatch."

The winter care received by the birds on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge and vicinity has undoubtedly contributed much to the steady increase in their numbers, Service officials said. Open water for the birds can usually be found each winter near the spring heads which feed the refuge lakes. The swans spend considerable time at such points and during the most severe winter weather hundreds of bushels of grain are distributed at these concentration areas. In the winter of 1944-45, approximately 170 swans, including 33 cygnets, wintered on these refuge feeding grounds.

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